Migration and Human Rights
MIGR-3500 (3 credits)

Morocco: Human Rights, Social Justice, and Cultural Transformations

This syllabus is representative of a typical semester. Because courses develop and change over time to take advantage of unique learning opportunities, actual course content varies from semester to semester.

Course Description

This interdisciplinary seminar offers an in-depth exploration of migration and human rights, with a special focus on Morocco as a critical crossroads of African, European, and Middle Eastern migratory flows. Through the lens of Morocco's unique geopolitical position, students examine the environmental, economic, and political forces shaping contemporary migration, analyzing how Morocco functions as a country of origin, transit, and increasingly as a destination. Students engage with the lived experiences of migrants and refugees by analyzing key issues such as racism, border regimes, and the reconstruction of identity in transit and diaspora.

Combining academic scholarship with real-world engagement, the seminar features guest lectures by local experts, artists, and activists, as well as field visits to NGOs and institutions in Morocco and Spain. Through five interconnected modules covering migration theories, identity reconstruction, racism and anti-Blackness, artistic expression, and Moroccan diaspora experiences, students develop analytical tools and critical perspectives needed to understand the complex realities of migration and human rights in a transnational context.

Learning Outcomes

Upon completion of the course, students will be able to:

- **Analyze** Morocco's strategic position as a country of origin, transit, and destination within African and Euro-Mediterranean migration routes, and understand its significance in shaping regional and global migration policies
- **Examine** how race, nationality, and legal status influence the lived experiences of migrants in Morocco, with particular attention to anti-Black racism and identity reconstruction among sub-Saharan African communities
- **Explore** how migrants use visual art, music, performance, and storytelling as forms of resistance, resilience, and self-representation in contexts of marginalization and displacement

- **Engage** with local experts, NGOs, and community organizations through site visits and discussions with Moroccan and migrant-led organizations to gain practical insights into grassroots responses to migration, integration efforts, and human rights advocacy
- **Reflect** on their own cultural perspectives and assumptions while developing a nuanced understanding of the complexities of migration, identity, and belonging in a non-Western context

Language of Instruction

This course is taught in English, but students will be exposed to French/Arabic vocabulary related to course content as well as local linguistic and cultural nuances related to migration through in-country expert lectures and field visits in a wide range of venues and regional locales.

Instructional Methods

SIT's teaching and learning philosophy is grounded in the experiential learning theory developed by Kolb (1984; 2015) and informed by various scholars, such as Dewey, Piaget, Lewin, among others. Experiential learning theory recognizes that learning is an active process that is not confined to the formal curriculum; "knowledge is created through the transformation of experience" (Kolb, 2015, p. 49). Learning involves both content and process. Learning is holistic and happens through various life experiences upon which students draw to generate new ways of knowing and being. Learning involves a community and is a lifelong endeavor. Learning is transformational. The suggested four step-cycle of a *concrete experience*, *reflective observation*, *abstract conceptualization*, and *active experimentation* embedded in the experiential learning model is not linear and might not always happen in that specific order, as any learning is highly context dependent. These stages of taking part in a shared experience; reflecting on that experience by describing and interpreting it; challenging their own assumptions and beliefs to generate new knowledge; and ultimately applying new knowledge, awareness, skills, and attitudes in a variety of situations and contexts are important for students to engage in to become empowered lifelong learners.

Required Texts

See the course schedule for a full list of reading assignments.

Attendance and Participation

Due to the nature of SIT Study Abroad programs, and the importance of student and instructor contributions in each and every class session, attendance at all classes and for all program excursions is required. Criteria for evaluation of student performance include attendance and participation in program activities. Students must fully participate in all program components and courses. Students may not voluntarily opt out of required program activities. Valid reasons for absence -- such as illness -- must be discussed with the academic director or other designated staff person. Absences impact academic performance, may impact grades, and could result in dismissal from the program.

Late Assignments

SIT Study Abroad programs integrate traditional classroom lectures and discussion with field-based experiences, site visits and debriefs. The curriculum is designed to build on itself and progress to the culmination (projects, ISP, case studies, internship, etc.). It is critical that students complete assignments in a timely manner to continue to benefit from the sequences in assignments, reflections and experiences throughout the program.

Example: Students may request a justified extension for one paper/assignment during the semester. Requests must be made in writing and at least 12 hours before the posted due date and time. If reason for request is accepted, an extension of up to one week may be granted at that time. Any further requests for extensions will not be granted. Students who fail to submit the assignment within the extension period will receive an 'F' for the assignment.

Assignment Descriptions and Grading Criteria

1. **Participation and Attendance (10%)** Active participation is essential for learning in this course. Students are expected to engage meaningfully in class discussions, field activities, and interactions with guest speakers and local organizations. Students will be evaluated on the quality of their contributions, critical thinking skills, respectful engagement with diverse perspectives, and ability to connect field experiences to theoretical concepts.

2. **Midterm Thematic Paper: Group Presentation (30%)** Working in small groups, students will research and present on a specific issue, case study, or theme related to migration and human rights in Morocco, North Africa, or a broader global context. The aim is to explore the complexities of migration through legal, social, political, and human rights lenses, using Morocco as a focal point.

   Requirements:

   - Each group will choose a topic and deliver a 15-20 minute presentation
   - Presentations should include:
     - A brief historical and political background
     - Key actors and stakeholders (e.g., governments, NGOs, migrant communities)
     - Human rights dimensions and legal frameworks
     - Local or international responses and challenges
   - Engage with visuals, discussion questions, or media (photos, short clips, maps, etc.)
   - Each group member should take an active role in research and delivery

3. **Migration Policy Analysis Paper (25%)** Students will write a 4-5 page analytical paper examining a specific aspect of Moroccan migration policy or comparing Morocco's approach to migration with another country's policies. This assignment requires

students to engage critically with course readings and demonstrate understanding of policy frameworks and human rights implications.

Requirements:

- Choose a specific policy area (e.g., regularization programs, border control, integration policies, etc.)
- Analyze the policy using course theoretical frameworks
- Include assessment of human rights implications
- Use minimum of 6 academic sources (including course readings)

4. **Final Thematic Paper: Reflective Essay or Creative Media Piece (35%)** Students may choose between two options:

   Option 1: Reflective Essay (5-8 pages) Write a personal and analytical essay that reflects on your learning and experiences in Morocco, connecting them to the themes of migration and human rights. Consider how your perspectives have evolved through site visits, readings, class discussions, and interactions with local communities.

   Option 2: Creative Project (e.g., Podcast, Short Video, Multimedia Essay) Design a creative project that communicates a key aspect of migration and human rights in Morocco. This can be based on interviews, field observations, or your own reflection. Projects should be accompanied by a brief (1-2 page) written artist's or author's statement explaining your goals and process.

Grading Scale

94-100% A
90-93% A-
87-89% B+
84-86% B
80-83% B-
77-79% C+
74-76% C
70-73% C-
67-69% D+
64-66% D
below 64 F

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Program Expectations

- **Show up prepared.** For an interactive course to succeed, you must be present, on time, and have your readings completed and points in mind for discussion or clarification. Being prepared with these elements raises the level of class discussion for everyone. Moreover, the content of this course is learned collaboratively, meaning that when a student isn't here, they take away from everyone's opportunity to learn. The only way to maximize our collective learning potential is if we are all here contributing. Valid reasons for absence -- such as illness -- must be discussed with the academic director or other designated staff person. Absences impact academic performance, may impact grades, and could result in dismissal from the program.
- **Submit assignments on time.** SIT Study Abroad programs integrate traditional classroom lectures and discussion with field-based experiences, site visits and debriefs. The curriculum is designed to build on itself and progress to the culmination (projects, ISP, case studies, internship, etc.). It is critical that students complete assignments in a timely manner to continue to benefit from the sequences in assignments, reflections and experiences throughout the program.
- **Bring your curiosity.** Ask questions in class. Engage the guest lecturers, as these are often very busy professionals who are doing us an honor by coming to speak. Remember, there are no foolish questions, and your inquiries might help others in class who have similar ideas/thoughts. By actively participating and showing curiosity, you demonstrate respect for our guests and contribute to creating a dynamic learning environment for everyone.
- **Maintain academic integrity.** As members of a learning community, we all want to submit work that reflects our own ideas and efforts. Even if it is unintentional, plagiarism can have serious consequences. Before you submit each assignment, ask yourself these questions:
  - Did I reference ideas, quotes, phrases, or facts I read about in a book, article, or website, without citing the author and year of the source where I read about them?
  - Did I paraphrase by changing only a word or two or moving the words around?
  - Did you answer "yes" to any of the above questions? If so, you are committing plagiarism and need to give credit to appropriate sources before you submit your assignment.
- **Principled Disagreement.** Learning often involves discomfort. Some discomfort can facilitate personal and collective growth. You, your peers, guest lecturers, instructors, and local constituents, have diverse experiences, values, beliefs, affiliations, and identities. Reflecting on these differences can be emotionally challenging, even when it deepens self-awareness and mutual understanding. In this course, we aim to encourage brave spaces where principled disagreement is encouraged rather than avoiding difficult conversations. *This is challenging work, and we will inevitably make mistakes.* Our goal is to thoughtfully critique ideas rather than attacking individuals. We aim to embrace productive discomfort and minimize unproductive discomfort, striving for principled disagreement.
- **Content Considerations.** Some texts and activities you will encounter in this course delve into sensitive topics that may be emotionally and intellectually challenging. Our

classroom is a brave space where we can engage with challenging ideas, question assumptions, and navigate difficult topics with respect and maturity. As possible, I will flag content and activities that are especially graphic or intense, so we are prepared to address them soberly and sensitively. If you are struggling to keep up with the work or participate in the course because of the nature of the content and activities, you should speak with me and/or seek help from counseling services.

- **Our social identities.** Our social identities -- race/ethnicity, class, gender, sexual identity, religion, mental and physical ability, size, national origin, citizenship status, and more -- shape how we are perceived, represented, and treated. They also influence what knowledge and learning is deemed valuable and legitimate. To challenge hegemonic paradigms and perspectives, this course intentionally includes readings, topics, videos, and assignments from authors and perspectives of diverse backgrounds. However, there may be gaps we have overlooked. Your constructive feedback is always welcome on how to make this course more inclusive and transformative.

- **Storing Your Work.** Keep several copies of your work as back up and keep one copy accessible to you through an online forum, such as an attachment in your email, the course learning management system, or cloud-based storage. This way your work will always be available despite technical issues. Lost files, deleted drives, or computer crashes are not excuses for late, missing work.

- **Personal Technology Use.** Cell phones and other personal electronics can be used for taking notes and other class activities. Off-task usage is not acceptable. You may be marked as absent for habitually using them for something other than classroom activities.

- **Course Communication.** Although the course calendar provides a broad overview and the general sequence of work and assignments for the course, what we accomplish in class will vary, and revisions to the calendar will be posted at the course site. You will need to check the course site regularly. You are responsible for letting me know about any network-related problems that prevent you from accessing or submitting assignments.

- **Classroom recording policy.** To ensure the free and open discussion of ideas, students may not record classroom lectures, discussion and/or activities without the advance written permission of the instructor, and any such recording properly approved in advance can be used solely for the student's own private use.

SIT Policies and Resources

Please refer to the SIT Study Abroad Handbook and the Policies section of the SIT website for all academic and student affairs policies. Students are accountable for complying with all published policies. Of particular relevance to this course are the policies regarding: academic integrity, Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA), research and ethics in field study and internships, late assignments, academic status, academic appeals, diversity and disability, sexual harassment and misconduct, and the student code of conduct.

Please refer to the SIT Study Abroad Handbook and SIT website for information on important resources and services provided through our central administration in Vermont,

such as [Library resources and research support](), [Accessibility Services](), [Counseling Services,]() [Title IX information](), and [Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion]() resources.

Course Schedule

Please be aware that topics and excursions may vary to take advantage of any emerging events, to accommodate changes in our lecturers' availability, and to respect any changes that would affect student safety. Students will be notified if this occurs.

Module 1: Migration and Human Rights Debates

This module introduces key concepts and frameworks linking migration and human rights. It begins with an overview of international migration and human rights systems, setting the stage for deeper analysis. Students explore major migration theories—including push-pull, world systems, and transnationalism—alongside the historical legacies of colonialism in shaping migration patterns. The module concludes by critically examining EU-Africa migration policies, with a focus on border externalization and its human rights implications. Class sessions may include conceptualizing migration and human rights frameworks, exploring migration theories and mobility models, examining colonial legacies and historical migration patterns, and analyzing EU-Africa policies and border externalization.

Required Readings:

- Basch, L., Glick Schiller, N., & Blanc-Szanton, C. (1994). *Nations unbound: Transnational projects, postcolonial predicaments, and deterritorialized nation-states*. Routledge.

- Crawley, H., & Skleparis, D. (2017). Refugees, migrants, neither, both: Categorical fetishism and the politics of bounding in Europe's 'migration crisis'. *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, *44*(1), 48-64. https://doi.org/10.1080/1369183X.2017.1348224

- Flahaux, M.-L., & De Haas, H. (2016). African migration: Trends, patterns, drivers. *Comparative Migration Studies*, 4(1), 1-25.

- Massey, D. S., Arango, J., Hugo, G., Kouaouci, A., Pellegrino, A., & Taylor, J. E. (1993). Theories of international migration: A review and appraisal. *Population and Development Review*, 19(3), 431-466.

Module 2: Identity Reconstruction and Resilience

This module explores how migration reshapes individual and collective identities through theoretical and lived perspectives. It begins by framing identity as fluid and shaped by transnational movement, then delves into how migrants navigate belonging, displacement, and diaspora in the Moroccan context. The module highlights the resilience of migrant communities through strategies of survival and mutual aid, while critically examining the impact of legal status, social exclusion, and gendered vulnerabilities. Special attention is given to the intersectional experiences of African women migrants, revealing how multiple identities

influence their migration journeys. Class sessions may include examining identity and migration through theoretical approaches, analyzing belonging, displacement, and diaspora experiences, investigating migrant resilience and community-building strategies, exploring legal status and social marginalization, and focusing on gender, migration, and intersectionality among African women migrants.

Required Readings:

- Benjelloun, S. (2021). Morocco's new migration policy: Between geostrategic interests and incomplete implementation. *The Journal of North African Studies*, *26*(5), 875-892. https://doi.org/10.1080/13629387.2020.1800207

- Delanty, G., Jones, P., & Wodak, R. (2011). Introduction: Migration, discrimination and belonging in Europe. In G. Delanty, R. Wodak, & P. Jones (Eds.), *Identity, belonging and migration* (pp. 1-20). University of Liverpool Press.

- Gross-Wyrtzen, L., & Gazzotti, L. (2021). Telling histories of the present: Postcolonial perspectives on Morocco's 'radically new' migration policy. *The Journal of North African Studies*, *26*(5), 827-843. https://doi.org/10.1080/13629387.2020.1800204
- Norman, K. P., & Reiling, C. (2024). The 'inherent vulnerability' of women on the move: A gendered analysis of Morocco's migration reform. *Journal of Refugee Studies*, *37*(3), 1-14. https://doi.org/10.1093/jrs/feae044

Module 3: Racism, Anti-Blackness, and Migration in Morocco

This module focuses on the intersections of race, anti-Blackness, and migration in Morocco. It explores the global concepts of race, racism, and racialization within migration, followed by an in-depth look at anti-Blackness in North Africa, examining both structural and everyday forms of racism faced by Sub-Saharan migrants. The module also delves into the impacts of policing, xenophobia, and securitization, particularly around border control and racial profiling. Finally, it examines African solidarity and resistance movements, comparing racial dynamics in Morocco with those in Europe to highlight how racial experiences vary across borders. Class sessions may include theorizing race, racism, and migration as global concepts, examining anti-Blackness in North Africa, analyzing policing, xenophobia, and securitization practices, exploring African solidarity and resistance movements, and comparing racial frameworks between Morocco and Europe.

Required Readings:

- Barone, S. (2025). 'It takes courage to return': West African migrants making sense of (In)voluntary return from Morocco amid adventure, failure and destiny. *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, *51*(4), 1040-1057. https://doi.org/10.1080/1369183X.2024.2377863

- El Arabi, S. (2022). Resilience and governance of dispersed sub-Saharan migration in Morocco: The case of the refuge-cities of Tiznit and Taza. *Frontiers in Political Science*, *4*, Article 910179. https://doi.org/10.3389/fpos.2022.910179
- Jeffery, L., Azdem, M., Ziou Ziou, A., & Bachelet, S. (2025). Vulnerability workers: Vulnerability and precarity in Morocco's migration welfare sector. *The Journal of North African Studies*. https://doi.org/10.1080/13629387.2025.2469053
- Norman, K. P. (2020). Migration diplomacy and policy liberalization in Morocco and Turkey. *International Migration Review*, *54*(4), 1158-1183. https://doi.org/10.1177/0197918319895271

Module 4: Migration and Art: Resistance, Memory, and Expression

This module explores the intersection of migration and artistic expression in the context of displacement. It delves into key concepts surrounding art and migration, highlighting how migrant storytelling in various forms, such as visual arts, literature, and performance, challenges traditional narratives. The module also examines the role of public art in reclaiming urban spaces, particularly in cities like Rabat and Tangier, and the significance of African music in reflecting migrant experiences. Additionally, it addresses the ethical and aesthetic considerations of exhibiting migration in museums and by NGOs, emphasizing the representation of migrant voices through art. Class sessions may include exploring art and migration as key concepts, analyzing migrant storytelling, testimony, and representation, investigating public art and urban spaces in Rabat and Tangier, examining music, memory, and resistance among migrants, and addressing ethics and aesthetics in exhibiting migration.

Required Readings:

- El Hamel, C. (2008). Constructing a diasporic identity: Tracing the origins of the Gnawa spiritual group in Morocco. *The Journal of African History*, 49(2), 241-260.
- Kapchan, D. A. (2007). Possessed by heritage: Sub-Saharan tradition on display in Tangier. *Anthropological Quarterly*, 80(4), 1051-1075.
- Pieprzak, K. (2008). Art in the streets: Modern art, museum practice and the urban environment in contemporary Morocco. *Review of Middle East Studies*, 42(1-2), 48-54.

Module 5: Moroccan Migration to Europe and Diaspora Identity

This module explores Moroccan migration to Europe and the shaping of diaspora identities. The module begins by introducing key concepts of diaspora and transnationalism, with a focus on return migration and second-generation communities. Students examine historical migration flows to Spain, issues of youth identity and belonging, challenges faced by returnees, and the political engagement of Moroccan diaspora populations. Through these readings, the module highlights the complex interplay between migration, identity, and human rights in the Moroccan-European context. Class sessions may include conceptualizing diaspora and transnationalism, examining Moroccan migration history to Spain, analyzing youth, belonging, and second-generation experiences, investigating return migration and reintegration challenges, and exploring diaspora mobilization and political voice.

Required Readings:

- Belghazi, T. (2007). 'Economic martyrs': Two perspectives on 'Lahrig'. In S. Gupta & T. Omoniyi (Eds.), *Cultures of economic migration: International perspectives* (pp. 87–99). Ashgate.
- Berriane, J. (2015). Sub-Saharan students in Morocco: Determinants, everyday life, and future plans of a high-skilled migrant group. *The Journal of North African Studies*, 20(4), 573-589.
- Dib, S., & Sandy, K. (2023). Sub-Saharan migrants in Moroccan print media: Discourses of violence, security, and illegality before and after the migration reform. *Asian Journal of Middle Eastern and Islamic Studies*, 17(2), 151-169.
- Sahraoui, N. (2015). Acquiring 'voice' through 'exit': How Moroccan emigrants became a driving force of political and socio-economic change. *The Journal of North African Studies*, 20(4), 522-539.